



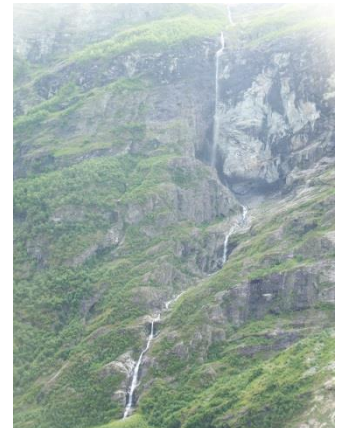
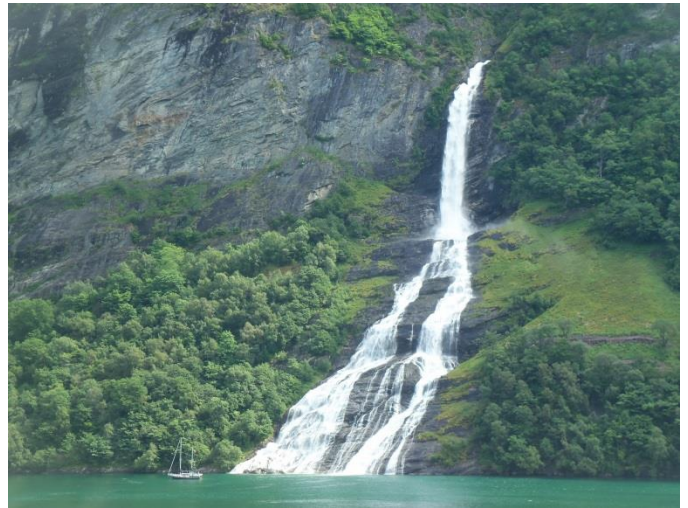
The Fjords of Norway

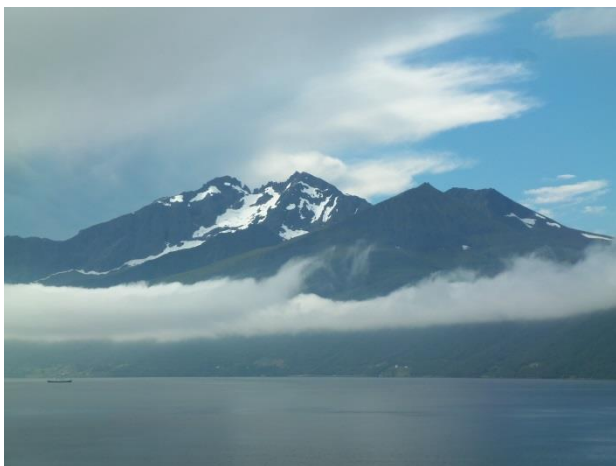
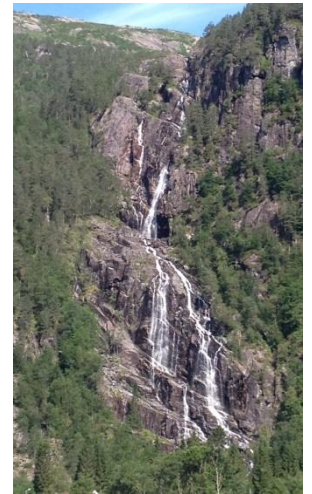
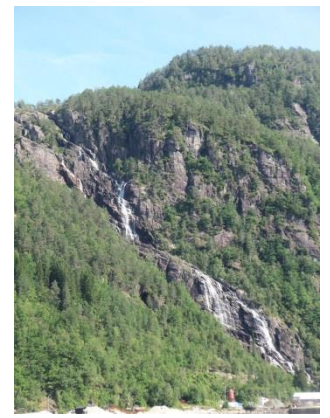


We joined a small tour group for a week's adventure in Norway this summer. The tour was arranged by a local couple from the northern Scottish islands. So rather than having to travel to one of the big southern cities to join a tour.....we simply took a ferry from the local harbor to reach the Orkney islands (which we can see from our kitchen window) where we boarded a small plane at the airport in Kirkwall. On the way, we stopped at a museum dedicated to the Orkneyinga Saga.....an ancient book written in Old Norse, compiling the tales of the Norse rulers of Caithness and the northern Scottish isles (Orkney and Shetland) from the 9th to 12th centuries. The museum is located at a site that is clearly mentioned in the Saga, as can be verified by the ruins of this round kirk (church), the only such structure in north Britain. We learned a lot about the founders of the society of which we are now apart.



After an hour long flight across the North Sea, we landed in Bergen, Norway. Bergen is the second largest city in Norway, and is a jumping off point for the famous fjords that line the west coast of Norway. I won't even try to describe the beauty of the fjords. I will let the photos tell the story.





Norway is covered with forest, so the early residents unsurprisingly built everything of wood. Here are some photos of structures, beginning with a traditional Stave church built in the 1100s. Stave churches were built with no windows and no seats, and were all wood. The only metal I could find were the hinges on the huge wooden door, and the candlesticks on the altar.





Note the wooden gutters and downspouts.



We saw a number of modern houses that still use this type roof.



The first stone structure in Norway was this castle from 1183. First picture is where the drawbridge originally was located.



Entire towns were built of wood, and were very susceptible to fire as they were built with no space between buildings.



Back in the day, roofs were of turf, and literally grew on the house.



16th century buildings in Bergen.



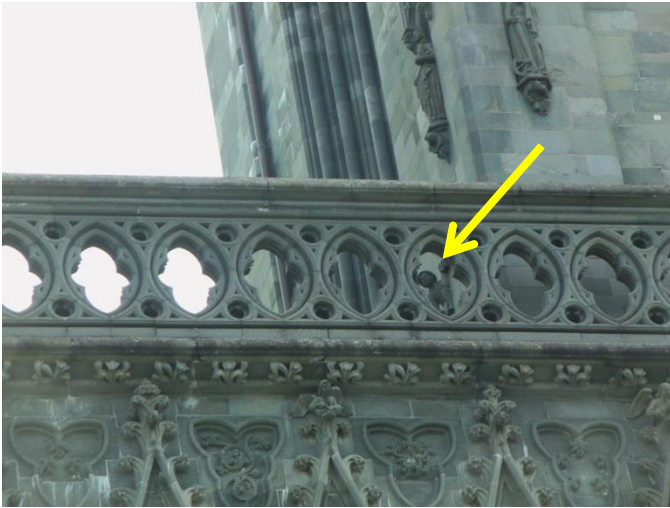
A World War 2 fortress built during the Nazi occupation.



The most impressive structure that we saw was Nidros Cathedral in Trondheim, built in the 11th century and very reminiscent of the cathedral at York (although not as large or as tall) especially with all of the intricate stonework carvings and flying buttresses.

There is a legend of a prophecy that when the cathedral was completed, a giant wave from the sea would flood over Trondheim and wash the cathedral away. To avoid this fate, the cathedral has never been completed. In fact, there is a hard-to-see stone statue 100 feet above the street, of a

stone mason holding the last stone.....which will never be set in place. With a good lens, and a helpful guide, you can spot it through a gap in the stonework.



The Atlantic coastal highway has some impressive tunnels and bridges crossing under or over the fjords.



And at one point, these ferries become the road, carrying drivers across a fjord that has nothing to carry the road across it.



We saw lots of seabirds (and some very cheeky seagulls who are willing to steal the fish-and-chips right out of your hand). And we actually

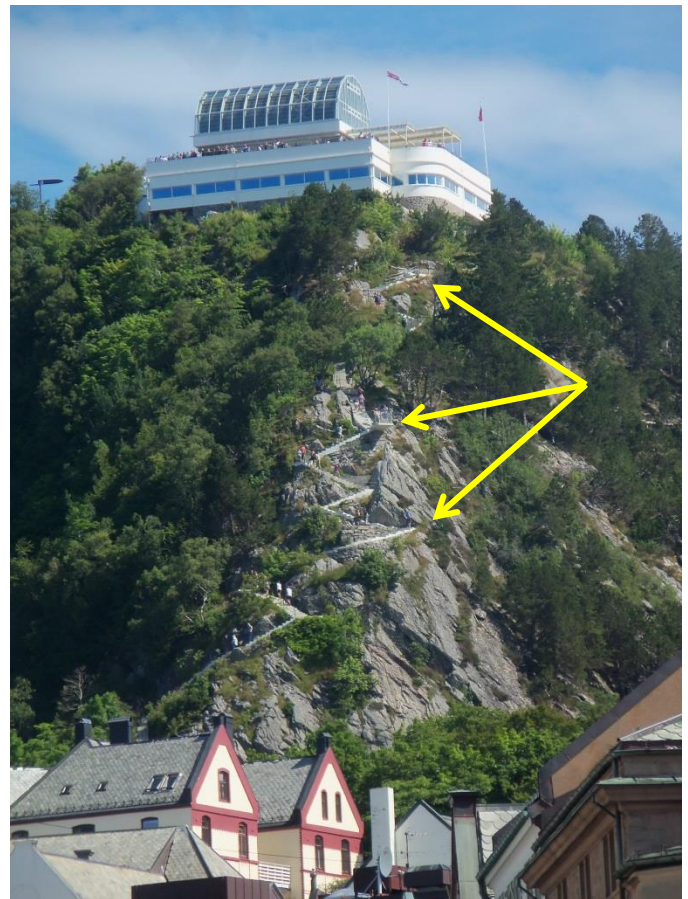
spotted a live orange jellyfish swimming in the crystal clear water.



Lots of flowers, both wild and tame.



In Alesund you can climb to the café at the top of the mountain by winding your way up the path up the side of the mountain (yes – we did). And the view up-top is impressive.





The variety and quantity of fresh seafood in the fish market is incredible. And we took advantage of it, stuffing ourselves with fresh fish at almost every meal.



Norwegian baking is delicious....especially the skolebrød – which we became addicted to....trying them from at least 6 bakeries in 3 towns. Delicious round sweet bread, with a custard center, icing around the ring and coconut sprinkled on top when the icing is still soft. It is a good thing that you cannot buy these in Caithness, or we would soon not fit in our clothes.



We passed through the town of Hell, and disproved a long-standing American idiom.....The road to Hell is paved in asphalt.....not a good intention in sight.



We had a wonderful time. Pete truly enjoyed letting someone else plan our Norway adventure, rather than having to arrange all of the details. And Wendy enjoyed that fact that there was a small but very friendly troop of fellow Scots with whom to compare stories of knitting and shopping and exploring. We would certainly join them on another trip if they headed off to someplace that interested us. And we are now comfortable enough with Norway to take our friends and family for a visit if anyone ever finds their way far enough north to join us.

